



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 22, 2011
PH11-040

CONTACT: Al Lundeen
Melinda McRae Beer
(916) 440-7259

Illegal Tobacco Sales to Minors Reach New Low

Rates still high in non-traditional tobacco outlets

SACRAMENTO – Illegal tobacco sales to minors have fallen to their lowest level on record in California, Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health, announced today. The 2011 Youth Tobacco Purchase Survey found that tobacco sales to minors at retail outlets occurred at a rate of 5.6 percent – the lowest rate in the survey's 16-year history.

"It is important to protect our youth from using tobacco which is deadly and addictive," Chapman said. "We are proud that fewer retailers are selling cigarettes to minors, but we have more work to do to guarantee that all kids in California grow up tobacco-free."

When the state first started monitoring illegal sales of tobacco in 1995, teens participating in the survey were able to buy tobacco products during 37 percent of tobacco purchase attempts. It has steadily gone down in recent years from 8.6 percent in 2009 to 7.7 percent in 2010 and 5.6 percent this year.

Although the illegal sales rate to minors was lower than previous years, there are still store types with high illegal sales rates. Stores that are considered non-traditional tobacco retailers, including donut shops, discount stores, deli/meat markets, gift stores and produce markets, have a higher illegal sale rate (9.8 percent average). Non-traditional stores with the highest rates are deli/meat markets (11.6 percent) and discount/gift stores (8.3 percent). This is about twice as high as traditional tobacco retailers, which include liquor stores, convenience stores with and without gas, supermarkets, drug stores/pharmacy, gas stations and tobacco shops, which average 4.8 percent. Traditional retailers with the lowest illegal sales rates included liquor stores (1.3 percent), convenience stores with and without gas (5.3 and 4.9 percent) and tobacco shops (6.5 percent).

The state's adult smoking prevalence rate is 11.9 percent, second lowest in the nation. Since 1989, California's tobacco control efforts have saved 1 million lives and an estimated \$86 billion in healthcare and other costs to society.

This annual survey of illegal sales of cigarettes to minors is conducted to gauge the rate of illegal tobacco sales across California and to comply with the Stop Tobacco Access to Kids Enforcement (STAKE) Act (B & P Code 22950-22963). All U.S. states and territories are required to assess their rate of illegal sales of tobacco to youth pursuant to the Federal Synar Amendment. California retailers caught selling tobacco products to minors are subject to fines ranging from \$200 to \$6,000.

[Click here to view data charts.](#)

www.cdph.ca.gov

